UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/47/749
2 December 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-seventh session
Agenda item 37

STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Letter dated 1 December 1992 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information on some aspects of the humanitarian situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 37.

(Signed) Dragomir DJOKIC
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

ANNEX

Information on some aspects of the humanitarian situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Significant progress has been made in the strengthening of the capabilities and coordination of the United Nations system in providing emergency humanitarian relief since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia attaches great significance to these issues and actively contributed in the negotiations of the guiding principles and modalities for relief assistance, including its coordination, which were determined by this resolution.

We firmly believe that humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality on the basis of an appeal by the affected country, with full respect to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States.

Yugoslavia fully supports the activities of the Department for Humanitarian Affairs headed by Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Jan Elliason, and their enormous efforts in dealing with the consequences of a plurality of man-made and natural disasters which have occurred in the short period since the new mechanism for humanitarian relief in the United Nations has been established.

Yugoslavia is particularly concerned and appalled because of serious threats to the security of humanitarian personnel and it strongly condemns as inadmissible the criminal attacks and looting of relief convoys, which have resulted in the loss of life of relief workers, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been, during the past year, at the epicentre of the greatest humanitarian tragedy in Europe since the Second World War.

1. The population and economy of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are facing many difficulties and problems that have been compounded and deepened further.

The civil war on the territory of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the imposition of sanctions, which take the form of the most comprehensive embargo ever imposed by the United Nations against any State, have caused a drastic fall in economic activities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

A sharp drop has occurred in industrial output, employment and earnings of both employees and the rest of the population, while severe drought, which practically halved the normal crops, has further aggravated the overall economic situation.

The economic sanctions make it extremely difficult to realize the processes of economic restructuring already undertaken, the privatization of small and medium-size businesses that have just begun to experience expansion. Long-standing economic ties with the companies from the former Yugoslav republics, from the neighbouring and other countries have been forcefully severed, although there exists a mutual interest to broaden and promote economic relations among the business partners.

The sanctions have also created insurmountable difficulties in ensuring normal living conditions for all, including more than half a million refugees who fled from other territories of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Rapid impoverishment is the main feature of the current social situation of the whole Yugoslav population. There is an increasing number of people who cannot earn enough to cater for their own or their family's essential needs. In real terms, average earnings fell below US$ 60. Approximately 15 per cent of the active population is unemployed and over 10 per cent of the employed are on forced leave, with uncertain prospects of continuing to hold their jobs. Drastic reductions in public receipts are increasingly being reflected in the payment of pensions, disability benefit, family allowances, unemployed benefits, social welfare and other payments to individuals or families, as well as subsidies for social welfare institutions.

2. The adverse economic conditions in Yugoslavia, which have been highly aggravated by Security Council sanctions, directly affect the situation in the social and humanitarian field.

According to the latest information, there are over 600,000 refugees in the two Yugoslav republics. The official statistics indicate that out of that number, there are 540,000 refugees in Serbia (199,000 from Croatia, approximately 304,000 from Bosnia and Herzegovina and circa 37,000 from Slovenia). The majority are Serbs (84 per cent), over 6 per cent are Muslims, 1.5 per cent Croats and others (Albanians, Jewish, Gypsies, Bulgarians, Hungarians, etc.).

There are 62,500 registered refugees in Montenegro. Out of that number, 55,800 are refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and 6.7 per cent are from Croatia and Slovenia. According to reliable sources, the total number of refugees in Montenegro is 10,000 higher. Consequently, the total number of refugees constitute 12 per cent of the republic's overall population. Serbs, Montenegrins and Muslims are represented in the refugee population.

In the aftermath of the war operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the number of refugees in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been steadily increasing - averaging 500 to 2,000 per day.

Children and youths of up to 18 years of age constitute 58 per cent of the refugee population in Montenegro and 42.6 per cent in Serbia. In both republics, the majority - over 80 per cent of the refugees - are women.

The refugees usually come to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia without any means of subsistence and cannot collect pensions, disability payments and other social security benefits that they have been entitled to in the regions they came from. Their prospects of coming back to their homes and property they left behind are rather uncertain.

Analysis shows that sizeable funds are needed to satisfy just the most essential subsistence needs of the refugees. The costs of their accommodation and provision of basic humanitarian assistance for them are increased by the expenses for their health care and education.

Viewed from the health aspect, refugees are the most vulnerable category of the population: babies, children, mothers, the elderly, sick and other ailing persons whose health protection is more complex and expensive even in normal conditions. After their tragic experience, they become still more prone to diseases and are in more need of protection and help.

Although the refugees accommodated in private homes receive assistance from domestic, public and charity funds, this is insufficient to compensate to the host families all they are ready to offer. The possibilities to help have been severely reduced by the United Nations sanctions, which affect their material status too.

The traditional family and human solidarity made it possible for 90 per cent of the refugees in both republics to be accommodated in homes of relatives, friends or simply people of good will who wanted to help others in need. The State has accepted this practice. However, time has shown that there is a positive and a negative side to it. On the one hand, such a form of accommodation is advantageous since it prevents "ghettoization" of refugees. On the other, it prevents the problems to be seen in their entirety and consequently their systematic and ultimate resolution. Furthermore, the host families are confronted with obligations they are increasingly unable to cope with without adequate assistance from the public sector or charity. Outside help is shrinking and insufficient to make up even for a fraction of what the host families have been willing to offer to the refugees from the very first day. Their readiness to help has been drastically eroded by steady worsening in their social and economic situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, further exacerbated by the Security Council sanctions. In such circumstances, practically the whole population of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia may find itself in need of humanitarian assistance, with shortages of heating fuel in the winter and the basic staples, not to mention acute problems in the field of health care.

An inter-agency United Nations mission visited all former republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in August 1992 and was able to see all the problems related to the accommodation of refugees and the assistance needed to that effect. The Mission concluded that the volume of the needed humanitarian assistance for addressing those problems in the period September 1992 to March 1993 stands at US$ 300 million for the refugeees in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia alone.

However, in the appeal prepared on the basis of the Mission's findings, the United Nations agencies envisaged less than half of the resources required to meet the total needs of refugees in the whole of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, that is, less than US$ 100 million in the case of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

While diminishing the volume of the assessed requirements requested in the appeal, resources for accommodation of refugees were particularly cut down. In addition, the needs of the host families were not fully taken into account as well as the requirements in oil for humanitarian purposes, which will be one of the major problems of the population of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and for the refugees it has accepted. Even if the assistance envisaged by the appeal materializes at the proposed or lower level, it shall still be insufficient to meet the needs of the refugees in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and many problems with ominous and far-reaching consequences shall remain unsolved.

3. A particularly grave situation exists in the health area in Yugoslavia, affecting not only refugees but other population groups as well. That situation has taken a dramatic turn which can now neither be remedied nor improved without the assistance of the international community. The implementation of the United Nations sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia marked the beginning of a sharp decline in the quality of health services, which from the level of modern health care existing in developed countries has fallen to the level of minimum health care services needed for bare survival.

The sanctions have cut off the procurement of Yugoslav health institutions by sanitary materials and practically discontinued the production of pharmaceuticals. Although medical supplies are not subject to sanctions, in practice, there are many problems related to the supply of health institutions in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia with sanitary appliances. Some foreign partners fail to deliver goods, even those paid for or agreed for delivery; others, instead of agreed primary products offer more expensive semi-processed or processed products. There are also frequent instances of impeding the delivery of goods for medical purposes.

The conditions prevailing in hospitals are on a very low level: disinfectants are lacking, food and heating oil are in short supply, medical equipment is increasingly out of order due to the lack of spare parts. Specific conditions are even worse: there is a lack of certian types of drugs. There are no cyclosporines for patients who have undergone transplantations, as a result of which transplants are rejected. Psychiatric wards again tie up their patients as they have run out of psychotropic drugs. Elderly patients are being taken off cytostatics which are in short supply. Pacemakers are being taken from patients who died and reinplanted, as pacemakers have been lacking for months. There is the most urgent need for surgical supplies: there are no needles and stitching thread, as well as surgical gloves, syringes, bandages, cotton wool and immobilization devices.

4. The Government of Yugoslavia has requested from the Security Council Sanctions Committee, as an exemption from the sanctions regime, the import of heating oil to Yugoslavia for humanitarian purposes. The import request involves 874,400 tons of oil products, which the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia cannot supply from its own production and which will be used as heating oil for 4,000 health institutions, 8,000 kindergartens, schools as well as a large number of organizations concerned with the care of children and elderly people. It would be a tragedy for the elderly, sick and children if it were impossible to ensure heating of hospitals, schools and similar institutions.

Yugoslavia is prepared to cooperate fully with the Security Council to offer further information which would facilitate the positive decision of the Sanctions Committee and fully accept monitoring, control and assessment of our needs by an independent body.

5. Confronted with grave economic difficulties and the worsening humanitarian situation at home, the Government of Yugoslavia is naturally equally aware of the humanitarian tragedy that is taking place in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the United Nations protected areas too.

Ever since the outbreak of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia allocated substantial resources as humanitarian assistance to the afflicted population in those areas. The representatives of the Red Cross of Yugoslavia visited the crisis areas several times, assessed the situation and drew up a global plan for the distribution of resources. As the needs grew, the original financial plan also expanded. Consequently, up to 30 October 1992, the Red Cross of Yugoslavia dispatched 544 packages with 4,000 tons of foodstuffs to 51 towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina (and 28 in Krajina) out of those resources.

In addition to food, medicines and medical supplies have also been dispatched. Substances for chemo-dialysis were absolutely necessary and in dramatically short supply. Thanks to timely provision of this item the centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina received this help in the most critical moments.

The lists of towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina where food and medical supplies have been sent are long. The relief has been intended for all citizens regardless of their national or religious origin.

The citizens of Yugoslav origin from abroad, as well as companies and associations from Yugoslavia, were able to send their help through the Red Cross of Yugoslavia to the war-stricken areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Up to 30 September 1992, 98 packages to 60 different locations have been sent with 1,087 tons of foodstuffs.

According to the information of the Institute for Statistics of the Republic of Serbia, in the period from 1 July to 30 September 1992 alone, 2,211,000 kg of flour, 250,000 kg of sugar, 119,000 kg of cooking oil and 28,000 kg of baby food have been sent to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On a number of occasions, the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia proposed that relief to the afflicted population in Bosnia and Herzegovina be dispatched from its territory. To that end, Prime Minister Panic offered 200 trucks to deliver humanitarian aid from the centres in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav air company is ready to reactivate 80 per cent of its fleet in only a few hours and join the international effort.

We welcome the decision of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to accept the offer of the Federal Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that its territory be used for transmitting humanitarian assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will do its utmost to ensure that humanitarian relief reaches its final destination safely.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is doing everything in its power to fulfil the provisions of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and to remove the causes for which the sanctions were imposed on Yugoslavia. The United Nations and the Security Council have been informed in full detail about the efforts of the Government. It will continue to implement consistently the policy of peace, leading to dialogue and cooperation.